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New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 6.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Dessima Williams, Chair of the delegation of Grenada.

Ms. Williams (Grenada): I am honoured to address the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session on behalf of Mr. Tillman J. Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada, and the people of Grenada.

Grenada commends the work of the United Nations over the past year, with special commendation for the leadership and stewardship of the outgoing President, Qatari diplomat Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. Looking ahead, we place our confidence in you, Sir, and your team, and look forward to your guidance of the work this year under the general theme "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". We extend Grenada's full esteem and support to our able Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whom we thank for his continued leadership and service to Member States.

Grenada recommits unwaveringly to the principles of the United Nations, as embodied in the Charter. Our commitment in national and international life to the norms of peace, equality and justice, and to human rights and multilateralism, is clear. Over the past year, Grenada ratified and deposited instruments of ratification with the United Nations, including for the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In ratifying the Rome Statute, Grenada became the Member State that brought that Treaty into force. That exemplifies our commitment to the principle of the rule of law, which resonates with every Grenadian as a result of our enthusiasm for justice and for ending impunity. Grenada welcomes the Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (resolution 67/1) of 24 September, and expects to make a voluntary pledge.

On the domestic front, in April Parliament passed the End Violence against Women Legislative and Policy Reform Bill. Aware that by itself the passage of a law is insufficient to change society's entrenched cultural attitudes and practices, we are also embarking on public education and on strengthening the capacity of Government departments, among other things. We will continue on that path to secure the rights of people, for we are convinced that law and security are the sine qua non for the facilitation of the peaceful settlement of disputes, which is itself the foundation for an international environment of peace. Indeed, democracy, good governance, social inclusion, conflict resolution, development and sustained overall progress are all helped by the rule of law within our countries and in the international system.

Grenada is a small island developing State. Nature has been especially generous to us, and our people are extraordinarily hard-working and big-spirited. Yet the fruits of nature and of our own efforts have been undermined by Hurricane Ivan in 2004, Hurricane

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Emily in 2005 and the advent in 2008 of the global financial and economic crisis. That notwithstanding, we remain confident that a pathway to success exists for us, based on our own efforts and the support of the international community and this great Organization.

From Grenada's perspective, the highlight of the past year has been the renewed international political commitment to sustainable development; indeed, interest continues to grow and to gain momentum. Sustainable development is one of our declared priorities in Grenada. It is a priority this year since the Secretary-General announced that sustainable development would be the number one item on his agenda during his second term, and you, too, Sir, declared it a priority.

In June, more than 120 heads of State and Government endorsed the paradigm of sustainable development in Rio, and the outcome document, entitled "The future we want", declares: "We resolve to take urgent action to achieve sustainable development" (*resolution 66/288, annex, para. 12*). Leaders agreed to articulate policies and programmes that would promote socially inclusive behaviour to quickly and equitably bring about prosperity and to do so in a manner that would instil hope and create livelihood opportunities for those yet to come.

Because of our tremendous green and blue endowments and the fact that our people live intelligently with them, Grenada has long considered itself an island of sustainability. That describes a holistic policy framework that defines our consumption and production path as spelt out in our five strategic development pillars: energy development; education, health and wellness; information and communications technology; tourism and hospitality; and agribusiness.

Grenada is committed, then, to a path of sustainability. Its determined efforts are led by our energy policy aimed at reducing fossil-fuel usage by 20 per cent by the year 2020 and at being completely carbon-neutral by 2030. The manufacturing sector is rapidly emerging as a producer of indigenous green and organic products, and the hotel sector is going green.

It should be recalled that Grenada is building itself back from the World Bank-determined loss of 204 per cent of its gross domestic product as a result of the hurricane destruction we experienced in 2004 and 2005. We have made great strides with recovery due to the generosity of our neighbours and friends everywhere, for which we remain forever indebted and grateful.

Since 2008, our situation has been compounded by the weight of the global financial and economic downturn, which is dwarfing development efforts due to loss of tourism and port receipts and even of remittances. However, we recognize with deep appreciation that, as our economy has slowed in direct response to the global economic crisis, our neighbours are again coming to our assistance.

Grenada is defined as a middle-income country, and yet its stability and growth are challenged by serious socioeconomic predicaments. We are facing the high cost of fuel and food, costs associated with confronting the illicit trafficking in drugs and small arms and light weapons and related crime, and an increase in unemployment and poverty.

What is consistent in that context is that, like so many of the Caribbean and small island developing countries, Grenada contributes least to the financial and economic crisis, greenhouse-gas emissions and the production of arms and illicit drugs, and yet those scourges have a disproportionate impact on us as compared to the countries that produce them, and of course our ability to respond effectively is far inferior.

So what, then, is the way forward? The way forward lies primarily in improvement of the domestic environment. We continue to achieve this through laws, economic and social policies and our national spirit of perseverance. Among our many initiatives, in January 2013, for example, Grenada will be co-hosting a meeting in the Caribbean with business innovator Sir Richard Branson on ensuring the sustainable management of our marine and coastal resources.

Yet small island developing States need a far more supportive international policy climate and affordable financing for a safe and secure way forward into greater sustainability. That will be the way we hold on to the hard-earned progress made so far with respect to the Millennium Development Goals and how we will be able to expand it. We hope then to be guided by the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development framework to further support our ambitious economic and social transformation agenda.

We continue to believe that peace and security and a reduction in military spending in the international community will be good for a global economic recovery, which in turn will be good for the financing of sustainable development. Unless there is recovery in the large economies to which our own economic life

remains tied, we will see no sustained recovery. We therefore call for commitments made to developing countries to be met, and we remain willing partners in South-South cooperation.

The staggering loss of life in Syria must be brought to an end by all those responsible. We call for a politically negotiated and urgent settlement, and we reiterate Grenada's support for the diplomacy work being carried out, inter alia, by the United Nations and the Arab League. We call for policies of inclusion and openness that will accommodate all just aspirations of all members of society in the Middle East and elsewhere.

We reiterate our call for a State for the Palestinian people in a negotiated two-State agreement with Israel through a peace plan. The injustices meted out to the Palestinians, including widespread unemployment, poverty and displacement, must end now. The Palestinian people, led by their Government, the Palestinian Authority, have our strong support for their just aspirations. We are convinced that the two nations can coexist side by side in peace and harmony, like so many other countries.

Grenada takes this opportunity to extend once again its heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of the United States of America and to the bereaved families of Ambassador Chris Stevens and his colleagues. We deplore those senseless acts and continue to call for the improvement of the protection of all diplomats serving abroad.

Grenada calls for the cessation of the trafficking of weapons through our Caribbean region and for a firm and comprehensive, yet expeditious, agreement on small arms and light weapons. We also renew our call for the preservation of the Caribbean Sea as a zone of peace and development and for the bringing of an end to the passage of nuclear waste in our waters.

Grenada looks forward to the third Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States in 2014, and we call on the international community to lend its fullest and broadest support to that Conference. We further call on the General Assembly to designate 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States so as to raise awareness of the special situation of small island developing States (SIDS) and to mobilize international support for their sustainable development. Support for SIDS from China in energy efficiency and from Norway in renewable energy is already forthcoming, as is support from Australia.

Without a legally binding climate regime to uphold environmental integrity, Caribbean and other small island States would lose the opportunity for achieving sustainability soon, and some could even disappear. We therefore see the upcoming eighteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Doha, Qatar, as an opportunity to move decisively away from that scenario, and we welcome the commitment of the European Union to agreeing to an ambitious second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and to climate financing. We call on other developed countries to do likewise, and on the Secretary-General to encourage States parties to move steadfastly towards finalizing a new binding climate treaty by 2015 and a gap-free period of climate financing starting in January 2013.

If the United Nations is to continue to lead the way in sustainability, peace and security, it must be reformed. The centrepiece of that change must be reform of the Security Council, particularly so as to include a seat for small island developing States. Only a revitalized United Nations can continue to play its historic role in guiding the world, its international financial institutions included, through the geopolitical volatility that is destabilizing the global economic and financial order. Reorganization should not mean, however, the loss of vital country programmes, especially for small countries. The United Nations must continue its irreplaceable work on behalf of women, and Grenada is pleased to serve on the board of UN-Women and to contribute to its endeavours.

Revitalization and reform must also take place in the Caribbean. To that end, we call for the complete removal of the economic, commercial and financial blockade of our sister Caribbean State of Cuba. The United States embargo against Cuba, now almost 50 years old, is in complete contradiction to the spirit of the United Nations Charter. Removal of the embargo has been specifically called for by the leaders of the Caribbean Community as well as by an overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations. Cuba plays a significant humanitarian and development role in the Caribbean and its economic liberation from the embargo will allow it to contribute even more through the dynamic of growing South-South cooperation. Furthermore, Cuba is now playing a facilitating and mediating role in one of the hemisphere's longest

political crises and thus making a major contribution to peace and security in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Two years after the unfathomable national disaster in our sister nation of Haiti in 2010, thousands of Haitians are nonetheless still homeless and suffering, as their Government remains without sufficient means to complete national rebuilding. Grenada extends its thanks, first and foremost, to all who have pledged and realized those pledges for the benefit of the Haitian people, for we are but one in the Caribbean. Grenada remains steadfast in its commitment to this imperative, and we renew our appeal to the international community to fulfil all its commitments and, where possible, to increase its contributions to the humanitarian and development needs of Haiti.

Just some 100 days ago in the city of Rio de Janeiro, our Prime Minister, Mr. Tillman Thomas, said:

> "The United Nations is indispensable to the future we need. Grenada considers the United Nations to be best placed for decision-making affecting the international body politic. Indeed, the United Nations has the full legitimacy needed to command authority [and] secure consensus and the necessary trust among all global stakeholders. We recommit to the United Nations and support its reforms."

To conclude, on 6 August, Grenada made history, winning its first Olympic medal, a gold in the men's 400-metre race, thus becoming, according to one calculation, the country with the highest medal per capita ratio in the world. Our people have not yet ceased to celebrate winning gold. Another enduring act celebrated around the world, however, was the graciousness demonstrated by the eventual winner, Kirani James, when he embraced and exchanged bibs with his co-competitor Oscar Pistorius, the outstanding double amputee from South Africa, who despite running an extraordinarily good race came in second behind the soon-to-be Olympic gold medallist. It was a simple Grenadian gesture of admiration, friendship and solidarity, but one that underscores that the human spirit must prevail in relations among individuals and, we dare say, among nations. That one simple act of recognition of the right and, far more important, the nobility of another human being transformed two runners into two brothers, one South African, one Grenadian, one shared humanity.

We name that the Kirani spirit, and we charge this institution with the Kirani spirit — "charge" as in giving it energy; charge as in commanding to do likewise; charge as in holding the collective responsible for our humanity; charge as in charging each nation and each people with their own big-spiritedness.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Stuart Beck, Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Palau.

Mr. Beck (Palau): This year's general debate began with a Declaration by world leaders that our collective response to all challenges must be guided by the rule of law (resolution 67/1). Palau is very proud to join in that Declaration, as our national story is inextricably linked with the international rule of law. Not long ago, Palau emerged as the last United Nations Trust Territory, granted independence after more than 100 years and four successive colonial administrations. Our unique road to freedom left us with a lasting legacy: a strong partnership with the United States of America and a constitution that guarantees the Palauan people the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Through independence, we have preserved our heritage, our culture and our environment. That preservation was marked this year by UNESCO's designation of the Rock Islands of Palau as 2012's only natural and cultural world heritage site. And, just last year, the United Nations Development Programme ranked Palau forty-ninth in the world in its Human Development Index, a composite measure of life expectancy, health, educational attainment and living standards. We are very proud of that ranking for this small, new country. It is a tribute to Palau's success.

Having gained so much, Palau has worked to give back to the international community and to make the world a better place. Palau proudly deployed officers as peacekeepers in Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands, and continues to do so today in Darfur.

Upon first taking its United Nations seat, Palau focused its energies on the odious practice of deep-sea bottom trawling. And though it has taken some time and considerable buy-in from others, the two consensus resolutions 61/105 and 66/68 show that we can help protect vulnerable deep-sea marine ecosystems and biodiversity on a global scale.

In 2009, from this rostrum, Palau's President, Johnson Toribiong, launched the first volley in an effort to save the world's dwindling shark populations. He declared the world's first shark sanctuary in his general debate address. The ocean's vitality depends on healthy shark populations. So we are grateful that States and territories from across the globe have joined Palau in committing to nurture shark sanctuaries. Today, almost 2 million square miles of ocean — an area approximately nine times the size of Palau's waters — are safe for sharks.

Palau was also the first to sound the alarm on the security impacts of climate change. With our Pacific brothers and sisters, we moved early on to declare climate change a security issue that demands the special attention of every organ of the United Nations system. That was a new and different way of thinking about the problem. Some sceptically questioned whether Blue Helmets would be able to hold back the rising tides.

But 18 months after we began, the Assembly adopted consensus resolution 63/281, inviting the relevant organs of the United Nations to intensify their efforts to consider and address climate change, including its possible security implications. That call was heeded by Germany, when it took up the issue last July as President of the Security Council. Thanks to Germany's efforts, as well as those of others on the Council, we now have a historic presidential statement highlighting the potential risks of climate change to international peace and security.

Germany's statement and resolution 63/281 have not stemmed the rising tides, but they have helped to change the way we understand and discuss climate change. No longer can anyone question the impact of climate change on energy security, on food security, on water security or indeed on our territorial integrity. No longer can anyone deny that rising seas and oppressive droughts are displacing people across the globe. As the United States Permanent Representative said at last year's Council meeting, to deny the security implications of climate change would be pathetic.

The world has reached a crossroads on sustainable development. We have recently concluded discussions at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and will soon delineate new sustainable development goals, focusing again on small island developing States. For Palau, that crossroads is an opportunity to better integrate healthy oceans and fisheries into the regulatory development framework.

Sustainable fisheries are Palau's lifeblood. For Palau, it has always been, and continues to be, a blue economy or no economy. That is why we have limited purse seine fishing, agreed with our neighbours to close the doughnut holes between our jurisdictions, and implemented an innovative vessel day scheme strategy through the parties to the Nauru Agreement. That is also why we have conserved 58 per cent of our in-shore marine area through the Protected Areas Network, banned bottom trawling and declared the world's first shark sanctuary.

We were honoured this year that the Protected Areas Network Act and the Shark Haven Act received the 2012 Future Policy Award for outstanding maritime policy and for contributing most effectively to the sustainable management of the world's oceans and coasts for the benefit of current and future generations. We thank the World Future Council, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Okeanos Foundation for the Sea and the Global Environmental Facility for conferring their generous recognition and support through that award.

Palau champions three straightforward principles for global fisheries. First, global fisheries should be fair. If distant-water vessels want to come for fish that traverse Palau's waters, they should respect our laws. They should fish within our limits and recognize our right to realize the benefits of our natural resources. Illegal fishing is tantamount to piracy; it robs us of our livelihoods and undermines our security.

Secondly, global fisheries should be sustainable. We should use every means at our disposal to achieve stock levels that will ensure healthy fisheries for the long term. That includes closing fisheries when necessary.

Thirdly, global fisheries should be accountable. Reports show that 87 per cent of global fish stocks are now fully exploited or overexploited. Those are the worst numbers on record. Regional fisheries management organizations, which stand in the shoes of the General Assembly, should do better and should be more transparent. We are encouraged that negotiations this year enabled the resolution on sustainable fisheries (resolution 66/88) to better reflect those three principles.

Palau is pleased to report on the success of a number of key domestic initiatives, which we have previously raised in the general debate. Palau has taken innovative steps to reduce our emissions by solarizing our airport, our Government buildings and our highways. By 2020, we will generate 20 per cent of our energy from renewable sources. We have also created a successful green mortgage programme to assist the financing of greener homes. That programme, which began with a small amount of financing from Italy, was recently the subject of a workshop among 13 regional financing institutions, with plans for expansion throughout the Pacific.

Palau is also working to connect itself to the world — literally. It is inconceivable to many of us here in New York, but Palau remains without broadband Internet. That means that no Palauan can watch the streaming video of this speech. The Broadband Commission of the International Telecommunication Union tells us that broadband access is a prerequisite to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and that a 10 per cent increase in broadband penetration increases a developing country's gross national product by 1.4 per cent. We are sure that a 100 per cent increase would fundamentally improve Palauan health, business and civic engagement. We continue to seek partners that might help Palau to reach that goal.

Last year Palau underwent its Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review. The most repeated recommendation by Human Rights Council members was that we should establish a national human rights institution. With the help of new partners, we are translating human rights conventions into Palauan, bringing the lessons of international human rights into Palauan schools, harmonizing our national legislation, regulations and practices with the international human rights instruments, and supporting human rights programmes and services in Palau through that formal institution.

All those activities have been complemented by the outstanding work being done to remove explosive remnants of Second World War from Palau. As President Toribiong stated from this rostrum last year, many of those explosives are still live and are being discovered near our schools, roads and utilities. With the help of our partners, much of this unexploded ordnance is being destroyed. We hope that anyone interested in our efforts will attend our upcoming regional workshop in October to see first-hand the successful model of cooperation between Palau's Government, non-governmental organizations, donors and the local community that is eradicating that scourge from our midst.

We would like to express our gratitude for the strong support and friendship of our partners for helping to get those and other important projects off the ground. Palau thanks especially the United States, Japan, Australia and the Republic of China (Taiwan).

Palau continues to believe that Taiwan's meaningful participation in the United Nations system will help to further promote the system's efficacy, goals and ideals, including those of the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Palau very much appreciates the President's choice of "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" as the theme for this year's general debate. It is as important as ever that we commit to upholding the peace and condemn violence wherever it occurs. To that end, Palau condemns in the strongest possible terms the recent attacks on the diplomatic premises in the Middle East. We agree with President Obama that such attacks are "an assault on the very ideals upon which the United Nations was founded" (*A/67/PV.6, p. 11*). We must be vigilant in protecting all diplomatic missions, wherever they may be.

Closer to our shores in the Pacific, Palau is also hopeful that tensions in the East China Sea will dissipate, and that all of our neighbours can engage in a more peaceful dialogue.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon cautioned the world last week that we are wilfully blind when it comes to climate change. We are awash in reports telling us that the situation is dire. We have experienced more than 100 consecutive months of temperatures above global averages. Nine of the 10 warmest years on record have occurred since the year 2000. Arctic sea ice is at its lowest level in recorded history. Coral reefs are disappearing at an alarming rate. Now, buried in the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change regarding the management of risk is advice to policymakers in small island States that, in certain cases, they may wish to consider relocating their populations. We assure the members of the Assembly that Palau has no intention of moving its people. Our islands are their home. They are the essence of Palau's very being. I can state with every confidence that Palau

will pursue every legitimate recourse available before we concede hope.

The current situation at the UNFCCC is unacceptable. After more than 20 years of negotiations, we are running out of creative ways to say that countries are being destroyed. Sadly, it seems that the most vulnerable countries have become acceptable collateral damage. The world knows the causes of climate change. It is within our grasp to effect a solution. No army stands in our way. If something is not done soon, all the good, hard work to which Palau and the other island nations of the world have dedicated themselves will be for naught.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In conclusion, we know that the times we live in are turbulent, but we must heed our leaders' call to be guided by the Charter of the United Nations and the international rule of law. Palau will continue to do its part by being a moral voice for what is right, and hopefully, a model global citizen.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carsten Staur, head of the delegation of Denmark.

Mr. Staur (Demark): In a complex world, it is smart economics and also smart politics to focus on prevention rather than cure. This holds true whether we address the global economic crisis, sustainable development and poverty reduction, conflicts like the one in Syria, or the arms trade and disarmament. In that context, the inclusion of women in political decision-making processes is not only the right thing to do, it is one of the most powerful drivers for positive change.

Our natural resources are increasingly under pressure. By 2030, the world will need 50 per cent more food, 45 per cent more energy and 30 per cent more water. Thus, we must chart a new course for our common future and develop a new paradigm for economic growth and development that will make it possible to deal with those challenges and to create opportunities for future generations.

In June, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), we made some progress, laying down the foundations for the transformative process we need to pursue. But the house still has to be built, and the General Assembly must provide some of the important building blocks to do this. Defining sustainable development goals as part of the overall post-2015 international development framework, establishing the new high-level political forum, and upgrading the United Nations Environment Programme are all key parts of the agenda before us. Denmark strongly supports the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative, launched in November 2011, and remains committed to its objectives. Access to sustainable energy, improved energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy are all necessary conditions for achieving long-term sustainable development. At Rio+20, a green economy was finally recognized as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development.

We need to work in close partnership with both the private sector and civil society, if we are to succeed in transforming the global economy. The Danish Government, in partnership with the Governments of Mexico and Republic of Korea, last year created a public-private partnership among progressive Governments, global corporations, financial institutions and international organizations, including the United Nations, called the Global Green Growth Forum. At the second Forum meeting a week from now, in Copenhagen, the focus will be on resource efficiency and growth, reinforcing the need to decouple economic growth from unsustainable environmental pressures and to refocus efforts on the creation of decent jobs.

While making the last push for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, we will start preparing the post-2015 international development framework and embark on the discussion on how to best formulate new and more ambitious goals beyond 2015. As stated, the sustainable development goals should be an integrated part of this exercise. Denmark strongly supports the promotion of human rights as a means to development, rights being understood as indivisible and interdependent. Such a rights-based approach is about placing people — men and women — at the centre and in charge of their own development. And let me add, in the case of a woman, this also means the right to decide over her own body. That is why Denmark welcomes today's launch of the high-level task force for the International Conference on Population and Development. Important parts of the rights-based approach are access to information, involvement in decision-making and strengthening the voice of civil society.

Four decades ago, the United Nations set a target for developed countries to increase their official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of their gross national income. Every year since 1978 Denmark has surpassed the target, and our development assistance will continue to increase over the years to come. We call on other donors and potential donors, including emerging economies, to increase their assistance as well.

We see a great need for support to fragile States like Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan and Mali, where fragility and conflict hamper development and poverty reduction and may provide a breeding ground for all kinds of instability. We see positive signs in those countries, but there are still many challenges, and we therefore require strong and continuous political commitment, both within the countries themselves and on the part of the international community, in order to succeed. We in the international community need to take a closer look inside our toolbox and find the right mix of development assistance and security policy response, including ways of addressing terrorism and in some cases piracy. In conflict-affected and fragile countries, there is a need to understand that without security there can be no development and that without development there can be no security. Denmark actively participates in promoting the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, and we are currently co-chairing the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building. A peaceful and prosperous development in fragile States stands at the heart of Danish development policy, most recently exemplified in the Sahel region. Denmark shares the ambition of the International Dialogue to have peacebuilding and statebuilding goals firmly reflected in the post-2015 international development framework.

We must also use international cooperation to reduce the level of conflicts and to set clear rules for all to abide by. Unregulated and irresponsible trade of conventional weapons is often the direct cause of unbearable human suffering. It further destabilizes weak and fragile States and is a hindrance to development. There is an urgent need for a universal and legally binding arms trade treaty, and, together with Germany, Denmark has encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his strong personal engagement with respect to the convening of a second arms trade treaty conference early next year. Now is the time to act, and we call upon the members of the Assembly to successfully conclude negotiations on a treaty and to do so without delay.

Let me use this occasion to once again call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and more particularly on Iran, to comply with international law and relevant Security Council resolutions. It is in Iran's own interest to take concrete steps to build international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is a cornerstone of international cooperation on disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context, Denmark actively supports the work of the Finnish facilitator to organize a conference on the Middle East as a zone free of weapons and materials of mass destruction.

For Denmark and the European Union, the rule of law is critical to international peace and security, human rights and development. It is a fundamental principle of good governance, whereby the State is accountable to its citizens and ensures their human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as their participatory rights. We therefore welcome the outcome of last week's High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (resolution 67/1) and the commitments made by Member States. Denmark also looks forward to an effective follow-up to the High-level Meeting.

International agreement on the responsibility to protect at the 2005 World Summit was a clear statement by the international community that the atrocities and large-scale tragedies of the last century must not be repeated in the twenty-first century. The global network of national focal points on the responsibility to protect — an initiative launched by the Governments of Denmark and Ghana, Costa Rica and Australia — is an approach to encourage and assist States in developing their national capacities and mechanisms for the prevention of mass atrocity crimes. We call on all States to appoint national focal points and to join the network, thereby demonstrating their commitment to decisive and timely prevention and response.

Even as I speak, we are witnessing in Syria a Government that is not living up to its moral and political obligations. Instead, it pursues a violent path of trying to quell the cry for freedom, for democratic reforms and for human rights. Despite several promises made to the international community during the last year, the Al-Assad regime has not stopped the violence. Instead

we have only heard the sound of machine guns, heavy weapons and airplanes firing away at civilians. Since I stood here at this rostrum a year ago (see A/66/PV.29), the situation has only deteriorated. Last year about 2,600 people in Syria had died in the conflict. Now, more than 20,000 people have suffered that fate. The Syrian people are fleeing from the shooting spree, and a quarter of a million of them are now refugees in neighbouring countries. More than a million people inside Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance.

We condemn the brutal violence and massacres of civilians in the strongest terms. The time has come to stop the bloodshed and the suffering of the Syrian people. We cannot look away while the increasing sectarian violence spirals out of control, the humanitarian emergency escalates and the crisis spills over borders. President Al-Assad has lost all legitimacy and must step aside to allow for a peaceful and democratic transition. At the same time, those responsible for gross human rights violations must be brought to justice. We commend the very valuable work done by the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on Syria. We note in particular that the Commission has stated that it is likely that crimes against humanity have been committed by the Syrian regime. The international community must act on that information. Denmark calls on the Security Council to refer the case of Syria and the serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the country to the International Criminal Court.

We urge the Security Council to unite and agree on strong measures, including comprehensive sanctions, to enforce the six-point plan endorsed by the Council. We cannot afford to continue waiting for a change of policy on the part of the regime, which it shows no sign of ever making. The Syrian people need action. At the same time, we strongly encourage the Syrian opposition groups to agree on a set of shared principles for working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria to a future free of Al-Assad and his brutal regime. While thanking former Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his valuable contribution to finding a lasting solution to the conflict, we now put our trust in the new Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and in his efforts at reaching a political solution.

The negative developments in Syria stand in sharp contrast to the situation in other countries that have been affected by the Arab winds of change. Calls for reforms, economic justice, democracy and respect for human rights have been heard, and in countries like Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and Libya things are moving, and generally in the right direction. But there are also signs that progress is not universal, for example, the recent decision by the Bahraini Court of Cassation to uphold the convictions of 20 human rights activists, including a Danish national. Calling for reforms is not a crime, as was rightly pointed out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Last month's election of the new Prime Minister in Libya by a democratically elected parliament is a concrete example of progress, which makes it all the more difficult to comprehend the terrible and tragic attack on the United States Consulate in Benghazi, which we have strongly condemned. It was a sobering reminder of the serious challenges that still persist in countries in transition toward democracy. Democracy does not happen overnight. It takes years to develop, and attacks by extremists should not be allowed to derail a process that the majority of the people have fought so hard for. We stand firm by our commitments to Libya, and we stand firm in there being no justification for such attacks — none whatsoever.

It has been clear since the beginning of the Arab Spring that developments in the region make the Middle East peace process and a negotiated solution even more urgent and important. A year ago, the Quartet in its 23 September 2011 statement (SG/2178) called for a peace agreement to be signed no later than the end of 2012. Regrettably, we face a reality which does not augur well for that to happen. As things develop on the ground, the prospects for a two-State solution, providing for two independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable States living side by side in peace and security, are diminishing, not increasing. As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the Oslo Agreement, it is indeed time to reach a final agreement.

The world is undergoing profound changes. Current and new challenges call for international resolve and multilateral solutions. They call for strategic approaches, focusing on prevention and early action to dismantle problems, rather than on belated responses and interventions to deal with them when it is too late, too inefficient and much more costly. And they call for the United Nations, the strength of which lies in its unique legitimacy, to stand up and take the lead in addressing global challenges. The United Nations can

make a real difference for the 7 billion people living on this planet. It is up to all of us to ensure that it does.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Portugal.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. His election represents one more important step in an already illustrious career, as well as a historic moment for Serbia, one that recognizes its courageous efforts to overcome a difficult recent past and to proceed with determination towards European integration.

Allow me also to express a word of recognition to Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his successful leadership of the Assembly in a particularly demanding year. We also offer praise and support to our Secretary-General for his commendable work, in particular for his efforts made to promote peace in a time of great challenges.

As Portugal is three months away from the conclusion of our mandate in the Security Council, to which we were elected by a significant majority of the Member States present in this Hall, we consider it appropriate to present an assessment to the General Assembly. We fulfilled our mandate with both rigour and transparency, always seeking to strengthen the credibility and efficiency of the principal organ entrusted with the protection of international peace and security. We were guided by the same principles that have always oriented our foreign policy and which have merited the trust of the Assembly, namely, the defence of the primacy of international law, the search for effective multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations in the international architecture.

With equal coherence and firm resolve we have defended the promotion of human rights, the role of women, the protection of civilians, the strengthening of action defending children against violence and the protection of children in the context of armed conflict. Sustainable development, the fight against poverty, food security and the particularly devastating effects of climate change on small island developing States, which threaten their very existence, remain, for Portugal, fundamental pillars for our action within the United Nations.

With equal perseverance, we have sought to strengthen the role of the Security Council in the fight against new challenges to international peace and security, such as organized crime; the proliferation of illicit trafficking, terrorism and pandemics; the Council's capacity to prevent conflicts and to bring mediation into play; and its efforts to improve coordination with regional and subregional organizations. We have played an active role, and continue to do so, in the collective efforts to overcome crises, such as those that emerged in Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Yemen, or the current challenges in Syria, Guinea-Bissau and Mali.

Our actions have always been driven by openness to dialogue and a constructive and balanced attitude, embodying our vocation to build bridges and generate consensus without abdicating our values and principles. We hope to have lived up to the high expectations and trust placed in us.

As Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, we sought to improve the internal working methods of the Council and its communication with the General Assembly, with a view to making it more effective and open and more in harmony with our times. We will present a report to the Assembly on the work undertaken on that issue.

It is important, however, to recognize that the credibility of the Security Council is also underpinned by a need for its composition to reflect the current geopolitical reality, one that is quite different from the dynamic that was in place in 1945. It is increasingly difficult for us, as it is for many others, to see that the increasing role of Brazil and India in the international scene has not yet been acknowledged with permanent seats on the Security Council, or that Africa is the only continent without a permanent seat on the Council.

The Security Council continues to confront serious obstacles. The number of victims in Syria is exponentially increasing day by day. We remain impotent witnesses before a true humanitarian catastrophe and a generalized systematic violation of the most basic rights of the Syrian people. In addition, the catastrophe could have been avoided had the Syrian Government not chosen military force and brutal repression in response to the legitimate protests by its people, which systematically excluded any possibility of a politically negotiated outcome to the crisis.

However, there is no alternative to a political solution, one that supports the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and allows for a democratic transition driven by the Syrians themselves, one in which they see their wishes reflected. Increased militarization of the conflict will undoubtedly lead to even more suffering for the civilian population, threaten the territorial integrity of Syria and increase the risks of destabilization for its neighbours and indeed for the region as a whole.

The appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, a diplomat whom we greatly respect, as the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria should be seen as a new opportunity for the parties to revisit their options, cease the violence and seriously engage in a process of political transition. For the Joint Special Representative's mission to be a success, the Security Council will finally have to exert joint, continued and effective pressure on all parties and most certainly on the Syrian authorities, who bear primary responsibility for the current situation.

The impasse in finding a lasting solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict is also of great concern and an increasingly urgent issue in the light of the recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa and the fight of the people of those regions for liberty, democracy and dignity. There will be no lasting peace, no stability and no security in the Middle East without a solution to the question of Palestine.

We understand and share Israel's legitimate security aspirations. Yet we also understand and share the frustration of the Palestinian people, for whom an independent Palestinian State is not simply an inalienable right, but also a straightforward question of justice. Only a comprehensive deal that is negotiated directly by the parties on the basis of United Nations resolutions and internationally recognized parameters and which solves the pending questions and is dedicated to the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace will meet both the security concerns laid down by Israel and the aspirations of the Palestinian people for independence, liberty and dignity. We appeal to the Israelis and Palestinians to quickly restart direct negotiations.

Another regional issue still at an impasse and of serious concern in the Middle East is the question of a nuclear Iran. We regret the absence of any positive developments on the issue despite the significant diplomatic efforts under way and the application of mechanisms of international pressure. The onus of the situation is on Tehran.

In Africa, we are faced with a grave situation in the Sahel, particularly in Mali, which threatens the whole region and could spread throughout Western Africa, putting both stability and development at risk in a number of countries. As a result of a tapestry of historical, economic and social influences, we are witnessing an exponential growth in terrorism, with increasing links to organized transnational crime, drugs and other sorts of illicit trafficking. In that regard, the international community should be more active. Accordingly, we support the outcome of the recent High-level Meeting on the Sahel, which contributed to the creation of an integrated international strategy for the region.

It is against that grave regional background that the crisis in Guinea-Bissau is unfolding. The military coup of 12 April interrupted a democratic electoral process, violating the principles defended by the United Nations, as was clearly recognized in Security Council resolution 2048 (2012). It is imperative that the constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau be restored. That requires the appointment of an inclusive Government that includes the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, which is the party holding the majority in the National Assembly; permission for the legitimate leaders to return without restrictions on their civil and political rights; and the organization of free and credible elections. Any and all solutions to the present crisis will have to respect international legality and the constitutional order of Guinea-Bissau, and must be translated into an internal, inclusive, and credible political process capable of creating national stability.

To that end, coordinated action by the international community — the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) and the European Union — is essential. Portugal is fully engaged and available to work with all interested parties in the process.

It is inconceivable that, in the twenty-first century, democratically elected African leaders are pushed aside by force and are made to live outside their countries. It is up to all of us to defend the principles of the Charter and to apply, without any ambiguities, the principle of zero tolerance in such situations. In that context, I note the increasingly relevant role of the African Union, which

has been working in close coordination with the United Nations for the promotion and protection of peace and security on the African continent. I also take advantage of this opportunity to congratulate Mrs. Dlamini-Zuma on her election as President of the Commission of the African Union. That also represents a milestone in the strengthening of the role of women in Africa, which we also welcome with great satisfaction.

Allow me also to refer to a successful case and a good example, Timor-Leste. It is a successful example thanks, first of all, to the Timorese themselves, but also owing to the efficient support of the United Nations. The United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste will conclude its mandate at the end of the year. It will do so with the sense of having accomplished its purpose, thanks to the maturity shown by the Timorese people over recent years, as exemplified in the successful presidential and legislative elections held just a few months ago. A new cycle of cooperation between the international community and Timor-Leste is now opening in line with the priorities defined by that country's Government.

In that context, Portugal will continue to support Timor-Leste on its path to economic and social development, including the strengthening of its institutions and democratic values, as well as the rule of law and the promotion of the human rights of the Timorese people. Timor-Leste, like Guinea-Bissau, is a member State of the CPLP, along with Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Sao Tome and Principe. Within the CPLP we share a common language and history, but we have also developed shared efforts towards the defence of universal values, through active multilateralism within the framework of the United Nations and the regional organizations to which we belong.

The significance of the Portuguese language as a language of global communication, business and culture, with about 250 million speakers, should be taken advantage of by the international community. For that reason, we will continue to work together to have Portuguese recognized as an official language of the United Nations.

I referred at the beginning of my statement to Portugal's commitment to multilateralism as the most effective means for finding common solutions to the global challenges that we face. I specifically noted our efforts in the defence of human rights and in the promotion of sustainable development. In that context, we support the outcomes achieved at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in part thanks to the notable efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Brazilian Government.

We continue to defend the universal, indivisible and interdependent rights of all human beings, be they political, economic, social or cultural. We have a solid commitment to humanitarian law and to the excellent work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In that context, with the commitment to defend and promote human rights and with the same sense of responsibility with which we undertook our current mandate in the Security Council, Portugal has announced its candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the years 2015 to 2017. We hope to be able to merit, once again, the trust of the Assembly and to serve, for the first time, in that body.

The changes in today's world call for the promotion of a culture of dialogue on a global scale based on tolerance and the respect for human dignity. The United Nations should remain in the vanguard of those efforts, namely through initiatives such as the Alliance of Civilizations. I would like to congratulate the High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations for his leadership and work in the defence of peace and of a better understanding among peoples. Indeed, the dialogue among different cultures, civilizations and religions is at the very heart of the work of the United Nations.

In conclusion, today, as in the past, the United Nations has to reflect on what it is and what we collectively want it to be. It should translate the indispensable convergence of the common will of States into actions that contribute to a better world. Its central objective should be the maintenance of international peace and security and greater prosperity for all. Portugal stands steadfast in its commitment to those efforts.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

Our world is afflicted by new political, economic and social turmoil that has disrupted the peaceful coexistence of the peoples of the world and reduced the quality of life for millions of human beings. New neocolonial wars have been launched aimed at seizing the natural resources of developing countries.

The proponents of capitalism, while attempting to overcome the deep economic crisis that has affected the global financial system, have been resorting to new imperialistic strategies and overexploiting workers, including those in developing countries. The social welfare State and the social achievements attained after the Second World War are now in the process of being dismantled. The new imperialists have sought to transfer responsibility for the crisis to those born in other countries and to immigrants, whereas the current economic crisis was caused primarily by financial speculators. Social policies are gradually being reduced or eliminated. The middle class has been growing poor. Hunger, poverty and unemployment are reappearing in the developed countries and are spreading around the world. Suffering and despair are increasing.

Meanwhile, Latin America and the Caribbean have managed to tackle, with relative success, the impact of those global economic and financial imbalances. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean reports that the economies in our region have had a significant rebound beginning in 2010, which enabled our region to mitigate the effects of the 2008 to 2009 crisis. Latin America and the Caribbean are well positioned on the world stage, thanks to the strengthening of initiatives in the area of regional integration, designed to strengthen political and economic autonomy. Therefore, the domination that the imperial Powers and their multinationals have imposed on developing countries is gradually being overcome.

The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America is a new coordination mechanism for dialogue guided by cooperation, complementarity and solidarity among sovereign nations. It represents an alternative for the liberation and independence of our countries.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) are regional spaces of multilateral cooperation aimed at strengthening the unity of Latin America and the Caribbean and are constructing a multipolar, balanced and just world in which the sovereign equality of States will prevail as well as a culture of peace in a world free of nuclear weapons and of weapons of mass destruction. CELAC and UNASUR have inspired social and human development, with equity and inclusion, and seek to eradicate poverty and overcome inequalities in the region. In Latin America and the Caribbean, we are seeing a new type of regionalism that is being promoted by diplomatic solidarity.

Today, the unipolar system of imperial domination is in crisis. A pluripolar and multi-centred system has been coming into being, in which emerging countries and new regional blocs are able to contribute to the democratization of international relations. Meanwhile, the imperial Powers have been promoting, within the United Nations, a new regulatory framework enabling foreign intervention in the internal affairs of States, trying to get States to give up their sovereignty, political independence and self-determination. Those Powers have become the judges, jurors and administrators of internal conflicts in the countries of the South, resorting to interventionist initiatives that are conceived here at the United Nations and implemented through the Security Council.

A new international order, truly based on the legal equality of States, is an imperative demand. Reform of the United Nations is necessary. The Security Council must become more democratic if it wishes to express the will of all nations. The General Assembly is begging for revitalization, and the Secretary-General should be elected democratically, by all Member States. International peace and security cannot be built on the basis of privileges for a few.

The international financial architecture that emerged at Bretton Woods is anti-democratic. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are never taken into account when decisions are made on vital economic and financial matters that affect all of humankind. Reform of the global economic and financial system must be addressed in the United Nations, and all countries should have an equal voice in the search for solutions to problems related to development.

In Syria we are following the same interventionist script that was applied in Libya. Imperial Powers are fomenting ethnic, political and religious divisions between Syrians and between Syria and its neighbours. They are shamelessly supplying weapons to the rebel

forces in an attempt to overthrow the Government of that Arab country. Venezuela supports the peace efforts being made by the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. We should encourage political dialogue between Syrians, but we reject foreign intervention and the deadly policy of regime change. We support the positions of Russia, China and other countries on the issue; they demand that the Security Council respect the territorial unity and integrity of the Syrian State. The Non-Aligned Movement can play a proactive role in helping to solve that crisis.

The Bolivarian Government reaffirms its support for the existence of a Palestinian State, independent and sovereign, within internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. We also reiterate our support for Palestine's admission as a State Member of the United Nations with full rights.

We are concerned about the warmongering threats of the Governments of Israel and the United States against Iran. A military attack on that Persian nation would have fatal consequences for world peace. We recognize the sovereign right of the Islamic Republic of Iran to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Respect for cultures and religions ensures the peaceful coexistence of the human beings who populate our planet. Within the crisis of capitalism, we have once again seen a resurgence in Western countries of racial hatred, xenophobia and hostility to other cultures and religions. The reprehensible video against the great Prophet Muhammad and Islam has naturally provoked protests among Muslim peoples. Such anti-Islamic expressions are not random; they are part of a political and ideological climate that fosters hatred against those who are different.

We deplore the fact that freedom of speech is being used to offend religions and denigrate religious prophets. What are the limits of the freedom of expression? Is it an absolute freedom that allows one to besmirch people's deepest beliefs and religious feelings? Venezuela rejects exhibitions of xenophobia against Muslims and supports dialogue between cultures and civilizations aimed at promoting peace and brotherhood among human beings. At the same time, we call for respect for the inviolability of diplomatic premises and the dignity of human life.

The United States continues to maintain its criminal economic and financial blockade of the fraternal people of Cuba. Venezuela emphasizes its solidarity with the Government of the Republic of Cuba and demands an end to that unilateral coercive measure. It is ironic that a country that practices State terrorism and shelters the well-known terrorist Luís Posada Carriles includes Cuba on its list of countries that support terrorism. We demand that Cuba be removed from that arbitrary classification, whose sole purpose is to justify the economic, commercial and financial embargo against its people.

Venezuela appreciates all efforts on the part of the United Nations to improve its mediation capabilities in crisis situations that could have negative consequences for international peace and stability. The United Nations should act in a neutral and impartial fashion, with a view to strengthening its ability to mediate in cases in which it is voluntarily and expressly requested to do so by the parties involved in international conflicts. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have very valuable experience in the use of dialogue and mediation for the settlement of disputes. The Rio Group made a major contribution in helping to end the terrible armed conflicts in Central America in recent years, and UNASUR has also helped to prevent and settle disputes in our region.

Venezuela welcomes the announcement made by the President of Colombia, Mr. Juan Manuel Santos, that negotiations will begin between his Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), with a view to achieving stable and lasting peace. Venezuela, Cuba, Chile and Norway are taking part in the dialogue process as supporters, by agreement between the Colombian authorities and FARC. The Bolivarian Government is backing peace and reconciliation for the Colombian people.

Venezuela supports the Republic of Argentina's right of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, the South Georgia Islands and the South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas. We reiterate our call to the United Kingdom to begin talks with that fraternal South American country in order to arrive at a negotiated and peaceful solution to that dispute.

On Sunday, 7 October, democratic elections will be held in Venezuela to elect the President of the Republic. They will be transparent and credible, because, as former United States President Jimmy Carter said a few days ago, we have the most modern electoral

system in the world. Between 1999 and 2012 we have held 14 clean national elections, a world record in political participation. We should issue a warning, here in this forum, that anti-democratic national elements, in alliance with foreign interests, are attempting to use violence in order to subvert the will of the people. The Venezuelan people are prepared, however, once again to defend their democratic and revolutionary achievements.

Venezuela needs a democratic opposition. Pluralism and diversity coexist in democracy. And peace is the only path for the homeland of Simón Bolívar. President Hugo Chávez Frías is guaranteeing the continuity of our sovereign and supportive foreign policy, focused on improving Latin American and Caribbean unity, enhancing cooperation with the peoples of the South, and building a multicentric and multipolar world, without imperial hegemonies. Similarly, he is guaranteeing the continuity of a national policy based on social justice.

The successes of the Bolivarian Revolution are evident. Venezuela has met the targets set by the Millennium Development Goals before 2015. The number of households in extreme poverty has fallen dramatically, from 21 per cent in 1998 to 7 per cent in 2010. Social investment in my country is among the highest in the world. Venezuela has the highest minimum wage in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the Gini coefficient, our country is the most egalitarian in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, we are ranked tenth among the best-fed peoples in the world. We are the country with the fifth-highest percentage of university enrolment in the world. Education and health care are free. All Venezuelans, without exception, have access to those rights.

Those extraordinary achievements in economic, social and cultural rights have been attained in the context of a participatory democracy, in which civil and political rights are fully respected, as never before in our country's history. The Venezuelan people have regained their sovereignty and self-determination. A revolution for freedom, justice and equality is under way. That is the Bolivarian revolution.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vince Henderson, head of the delegation of Dominica.

Mr. Henderson (Dominica): On behalf of the Government and people of the Commonwealth of Dominica, I would like to congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to wish him every success. We also express our appreciation and gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for the able manner in which he presided over the sixty-sixth session.

The sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly has convened at a time when we face myriad challenges — the impact of climate change, civil conflicts, hunger and starvation, poverty, HIV/AIDS and chronic non-communicable diseases. Those challenges, however, are equally matched by the tremendous opportunities created by the rapid advancement in science and technology and the unprecedented level of international cooperation.

We therefore need the political will to harness those opportunities for the benefit of our peoples. That would necessarily require the transformation of multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, including its organs and agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to reflect equity and inclusion. Those changes must be supported by a shift in our systems of production and consumption and by a new economic system, built on the principles of fairness and differentiated treatment on the basis of the unique challenges of countries, especially the vulnerability of small island developing States (SIDS). I am confident that, with such an approach, we will be able to overcome those challenges in a functioning multilateral system.

The President returned to the Chair.

The unsustainable consumption and production systems that continue to deplete the world's resources and that simultaneously contribute to global warming remain a major threat to the survival of those of us who live close to the world's oceans. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was a commendable effort by the international community to take stock of the human impact on the Earth's resources and to commit to reversing the present trend. The outcome document, entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), falls short of our expectations. However, it remains a work in progress and presents a useful platform for the ongoing discussion of multilateral resolutions to the growing concern of sustainable development. More important, the outcome

document is indicative of what the international community can achieve when collective energies are harnessed to present an international response.

The Commonwealth of Dominica is pleased that Rio+20 reaffirmed an international commitment to support small island developing States. We especially welcome the agreement to convene the third Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS in 2014 in the Pacific region. In fact, we are of the view that the third Global Conference will provide an opportunity for the implementation of the outcomes of Rio+20, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

As a small island developing State, Dominica is committed to the fundamental principle of environmental sustainability. That is clearly demonstrated by our approach to sustainable development as the "Nature Island". The sustainable use of our natural resources has contributed to our tourism product, while at the same time blessing our citizens with the most beautiful place on Earth to call home. Notwithstanding that, our great vulnerability continues to put us at the mercy of countries that promote and employ unsustainable practices. The challenges include an international economic system dominated by the strong and the powerful that pays little or no regard to the vulnerable. If multilateralism is to survive, we need to focus on correcting that lopsided system, which is destined to annihilate SIDS.

Dominica's very vulnerability to the effects of global warming underscores our commitment to a multilateral approach aimed at combating climate change. The impact of climate change continues to manifest itself in a number of ways, resulting in greater challenges to the survival of SIDS. The failure to date to reach a legally binding outcome on climate change is a cause of grave concern. While the debate continues, the challenges to our islands increase.

We are encouraged, however, by the fact that the recently concluded climate talks in Bangkok prepared a fertile ground for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Doha later this year. Nevertheless, Dominica continues to stress the importance of extending and amending the Kyoto Protocol before it lapses. The timely creation of a road map for a new legally binding document must be treated as a matter of urgency. We look forward to the Doha talks, of which we have great expectations.

One major contributor to climate change is the consumption of fossil fuels for the production of electricity. The importation of fossil fuels also has the greatest impact on the economic vulnerability of many small island developing States. Addressing energy issues is therefore central to responding to the challenges of climate change and sustainable development. Today, there is still a significant portion of many remote and rural island communities that has little or no access to modern and affordable energy services.

The low-carbon economies in SIDS therefore provide an opportunity to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, while decreasing dependence on imported fossil fuels. By generating their own energy from natural renewable sources, SIDS will be able to achieve energy security. The savings realized from avoiding the cost of importing fossil fuels could be used for adaptation and developmental needs. For that and other reasons, the SIDS Sustainable Energy Initiative, known as SIDS DOCK, was instituted. The Initiative currently provides a global platform for SIDS to pursue their renewable energy ambitions by building capacity and by providing technical support to member States. The Governments of Denmark and Japan, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank continue to play a significant role in making energy independence a reality for SIDS. The recent partnership with the Clinton Foundation has given new hope to a number of islands that are vigorously pursuing their renewable energy aspirations.

Dominica has the honour of serving as Chair of SIDS DOCK. My delegation, on its own behalf as well as that of SIDS DOCK, fully endorses the Barbados Declaration on Achieving Sustainable Energy for All in Small Island Developing States, signed by ministers and other heads of delegation of the Alliance of Small Island States at the ministerial conference held in Bridgetown in May. The commitments made and targets set to increase the percentage of renewable energy and increase energy efficiency in energy portfolios are testimony to our region's commitment to the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative. We congratulate the Secretary-General on launching the initiative, which SIDS DOCK joined and is committed to actively supporting.

Dominica, the "Nature Island", continues to pursue the development of its geothermal resources. We are pleased to announce that the recently concluded test-drilling in the Roseau Valley has confirmed that our geothermal resources have the potential to supply our domestic needs and provide an exportable surplus. That will allow us to move away from the importation of fossil fuel for the generation of electricity within the next five years, while also reducing the cost of electricity for our people. At the same time, the development of a power plant for export to the French territories of Guadeloupe and Martinique will provide a source of revenue for the island. Negotiations are ongoing and expected to conclude by the end of 2012. Work is expected to commence on the first power plant in the first quarter of 2013. Dominica's energy initiative has the potential to transform its economy and to improve the quality of life of its people. The Government of Dominica, as trustee of the island's resources on behalf of its people, is therefore ensuring that it manages that process responsibly.

We have sought and are receiving assistance from some of the most reputable consultants in the world. The support of the Clinton Climate Initiative has allowed us to navigate through the complex challenges of the project. We therefore wish to express our gratitude to President Bill Clinton for his continued support in that initiative. We anticipate that, by 2017, all of our electricity needs will be met by a combination of sources, namely, hydro and geothermal. By 2020 we expect to be exporting electricity to our neighbouring islands via submarine cables. That, coupled with our sustainable development practices, means that Dominica will go beyond carbon neutrality to being carbon-negative by the year 2020.

Like Dominica, many SIDS are pursuing national renewable energy initiatives, and more than 20 SIDS have made pledges under the Sustainable Energy for All initiative. However, unsustainable debt and the lack of technology make it impossible for them to achieve their goals. We therefore invite other developed countries and the international community to join the Governments of Denmark and Japan and the Clinton Climate Initiative in the SIDS DOCK partnership, and the Government of Norway in its Energy for All initiative, in providing critical support to SIDS.

The global community should heed the prolonged, and in some cases recent, cries of peoples around the world. The response should not be selective or be based on narrow national interests. Injustice anywhere and in any form should not be tolerated. The so-called Arab Spring has been one expression of people's discontent. The international community must support the wishes of people as they struggle to create their own democratic systems, driven by their aspirations.

The recent spate of attacks on United States missions and personnel, or attacks on the diplomatic facilities of any country, does nothing to advance the causes of those who may be marginalized or who feel offended by other democratic systems. Regardless of what may have led to the protests, the Commonwealth of Dominica condemns those unjustified attacks, which resulted in the unfortunate loss of life of United States Ambassador Christopher Stevens and his colleagues.

While we are heartened by the attention that has been given to the recent outcries from some corners of the globe, we remain concerned that in our part of the world the cries of people who have been suffering for decades have aroused less sympathy. The suffering of our brothers and sisters in the Republic of Haiti persists, much to the concern of Dominica and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We are grateful to those countries that have responded and to others that have supported and continue to support the rebuilding efforts in Haiti. However, we are still far from assisting the people of Haiti to reach a state of normalcy where they can enjoy the basic necessities of life. We therefore call upon the international community to heed the cry of Haiti and to provide support in the rebuilding efforts.

The Caribbean region also continues to witness the unheeded call for the discontinuation of the economic, financial and trade embargo on our brothers and sisters in the Republic of Cuba. We call upon the Government of the United States to allow the people of Cuba to be fully integrated into the global trading system, thereby enabling them to improve their lives and allowing the world to benefit from their tremendous contributions, especially in the area of science and technology.

The international trade, transfer and use of conventional arms, weapons, munitions and ammunition continue to threaten international peace and security. Dominica, like its sister nations in CARICOM, is not immune to that debilitating phenomenon. Our region continues to be affected by an increase in gangs and violent criminal activities born out of the trade and transfer of illicit arms and drugs throughout the Caribbean region, from North to South America. We are therefore perturbed that, despite four weeks of

rigorous deliberations and intense negotiations, the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty did not result in the finalization of the treaty. However, like the rest of our CARICOM colleagues, we believe that the 26 July text from the Chair of the Conference provides a blueprint for a possible final document. As leaders, the task is now ours to finalize a legally binding document in the interests of the protection of our people.Dominica remains optimistic that that can be achieved during the current session of the General Assembly, and we reaffirm our commitment to the realization of a robust arms trade treaty.

Dominica would like to take this opportunity to applaud the role and efforts of the United Nations in combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the global community. The long-term socioeconomic development of many nations, particularly SIDS such as Dominica, is severely compromised because of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in our region. Associated with that illicit trade is the trafficking of narcotics through the Caribbean region, from South to North America, which has presented new challenges to the maintenance of peace and security in our region. It underscores the urgent need for a legally binding international instrument that addresses the control and monitoring of the illicit trade in small arms among States and non-State actors.

In conclusion, Dominica remains committed to collaborating with the United Nations and all its agencies, as well as with all Member States, to strengthen the mission of this noble body that, notwithstanding its imperfections, is critical to maintaining world peace and security. We reaffirm our confidence in the United Nations system as the ultimate negotiating and deliberative body for addressing the major challenges confronting the world.

May we all rise to the occasion and resolve to bring peace, security and prosperity to every corner of the globe.

Before I finish, Sir, I hope that, given that I am the last speaker, you will allow me the latitude to address a word of thanks to the interpreters and the rest of the United Nations staff for their hard work over the past week. We know that their task has not been easy, and we appreciate their contribution.

May God bless the United Nations. May God bless us all.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

Several representatives have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and to 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): The delegation of Pakistan would like to exercise its right of reply with regard to remarks made by India's Minister for External Affairs this morning (see A/67/PV.19).

Let me begin by emphasizing that the reference to the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in the statement by the President of Pakistan (see A/67/PV.7) was not unwarranted. Let me also make it absolutely clear that Jammu and Kashmir is neither an integral part of India nor has it ever been. I will now quote the relevant excerpt from the President's statement.

> "Our principled position on territorial disputes remains the bedrock of our foreign policy. We will continue to support the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to peacefully choose their destiny in accordance with the Security Council's long-standing resolutions on this matter. Kashmir remains a symbol of the failures, rather than the strengths, of the United Nations system. We feel that a resolution of these issues can be arrived at only in an environment of cooperation.
>
> "By normalizing trade relations, we want to create a regional South Asian narrative. Such a narrative will provide an environment that will mutually benefit the countries of our region."

The President of Pakistan said no more, no less.

Mr. Sahraei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today, a Western delegation made an allegation against the Iranian nuclear programme. The same accusation was also made by a few other Western countries during the Assembly's general debate. In exercising our right of reply, I would like to make the following statement.

Like the other parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Islamic Republic of Iran has an inalienable right to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination. Iran is firmly determined to exercise that right in full. At the

same time, we are fully committed to our obligations under the NPT. Our commitment to non-proliferation remains intact.

The nuclear activities of my country are and always have been exclusively for peaceful purposes. The non-diversion of the declared nuclear material in Iran has been repeatedly confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In line with its obligations under its IAEA Safeguards Agreement, Iran fully cooperates with the Agency. All activities at our nuclear sites are under the IAEA's 24-hour surveillance cameras, and the Agency's resident inspectors regularly visit the sites and measure and seal enriched-uranium containers.

The IAEA Director General, in all of his relevant reports, including his latest report on 13 June, has stated that

> "the Agency continues to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material at the nuclear facilities and LOFs [location outside facilities] declared by Iran under its safeguards agreement".

It is therefore evident that these politically motivated allegations are without any foundation. The objective behind such claims, which were made by a few Western countries that are either nuclear-weapon States or under the nuclear umbrella, is an attempt to divert attention from their own abysmal record on non-compliance with their nuclear disarmament obligations under the NPT.

Instead of making unfounded allegations denying the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, they should comply with their legal obligations under the NPT, in particular by freezing modernization of their nuclear arsenals, immediately withdrawing their nuclear weapons from other countries, refraining from nuclear-weapon-sharing and from cooperating with non-parties to the NPT, and eliminating all their nuclear weapons.

Moreover, the unwarranted focus by those Western countries on Iran's peaceful programme and their simultaneous deadly silence on the nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction of the Zionist regime is entirely hypocritical. Iran's exclusively peaceful nuclear programme is not a threat. The only threat to regional and international peace and security is the Zionist regime, which has more than 200 nuclear warheads and is the only non-party to the NPT in the Middle East. There is no greater source of insecurity and instability in the Middle East and beyond than the Israeli regime, which tries to identify red lines for the peaceful nuclear activities of others, when it itself, confident in its great patron, has crossed every red line in the course of its history and committed every type of crime, from crimes of aggression to war crimes and crimes against humanity, even as it continues to threaten other countries.

That regime must accede to all treaties relating to weapons of mass destruction, in particular the NPT, without conditions or further delay, put all of its nuclear activities under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreement and fully comply with all its international obligations.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that, while Iran stands ready to engage in a serious and constructive negotiation with interested parties, based on justice and mutual respect and without preconditions, it will never compromise on its inalienable right to the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology, including its inherent right to develop a national nuclear fuel cycle.

Mr. Kumar (India): I take the floor in response to the gratuitous references by the delegation of Pakistan about the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is and has always been an integral part of India. It is ironic that those comments were made by the representative of a country that persists in its illegal occupation of a part of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Those references constitute a clear interference in the internal affairs of India. We reject them in their entirety.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): I would like to speak in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia today at the 19th meeting, in the Assembly's general debate.

It is clear that the statement of the Foreign Minister of Armenia represents yet another example of utter falsehood. It is also illustrative of Armenia's uninterrupted attempts to create the wrong impression of the real situation on the ground and to deflect the attention of the international community from the urgent need to address the main problems caused the continuing aggression against Azerbaijan by that Member State. However, such a futile effort easily collapses, like a house of cards, against the background of facts and testifies to a diametrically opposite situation.

By trying to criticize and lecture neighbouring countries, the Foreign Minister of Armenia fell into

his usual forgetfulness. Otherwise, he would have recollected that his country unleashed the war and perpetrated aggression against Azerbaijan, carried out ethnic cleansing and committed other heinous crimes against Azerbaijan's civilian population in the course of the war. Most important, he passed over in silence the fact that it was indeed Armenia that used military force to occupy the territories of Azerbaijan, and not the other way around.

It is curious that the Foreign Minister of Armenia believes that his country and the international community speak in one language regarding the Daghlyq Garabagh issue and that Armenia's position is in line with documents adopted by international organizations. Needless to say, the whole foundation of the international legal order will collapse if that happens. The words of the Armenian Minister represent an obvious falsification so characteristic of Armenian high-ranking officials.

It would be pertinent to recall Armenians' persistent non-compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, which, inter alia, demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Armenian forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The short memory of Armenian officials also extends to numerous documents and decisions of other international organizations calling for an end to the occupation of Azerbaijani lands. The most recent are the final documents adopted earlier this year at the summits of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which unequivocally supported the position of Azerbaijan. It should be particularly noted that the President of Armenia refused to participate in the summits of NATO and NAM only because of the approach they took in regard to the conflict and the principles to be applied for its resolution.

Another recent example includes the reaction of the international community to the so-called legal elections conducted by Armenia in July in the occupied Daghlyq Garabagh region of Azerbaijan. In their statement and communications, international organizations and individual States voiced their unequivocal protests against the so-called elections and declared the provocative action null and void.

The statement of the Foreign Minister of Armenia contains groundless comments on the military budget increase of Azerbaijan. Complaints in that regard are obviously ridiculous, as they are voiced by the representative of an aggressor State in regard to the military capability of its victim. At the same time, it is well known that the annual defence spending of Azerbaijan remains in line with its overall budget increases, that Azerbaijan continues to spend a much smaller percentage of its gross domestic product on its army than does Armenia, and that the size of the armed forces of Azerbaijan is proportional to its population, territory and the length of its borders and remains less than that of Armenia. Indeed, a comparative analysis shows that in correlation to its population, territory, annual budget and gross domestic product, Armenia is the most militarized country of the South Caucasus in terms of military expenditures, foreign military assistance, military personnel and quantity of procured armaments.

The Foreign Minister of Armenia spent much of his statement conveying his country's distorted perception of the case of Ramil Safarov, relating to an incident that took place during a NATO-sponsored training course in Budapest. I would like to recall that the detailed answer to the irresponsible speculations of the Armenian side in that regard is contained in our letter of 17 September 2012, addressed to the Secretary-General and circulated as document A/66/905.

While trying to introduce that case as allegedly the manifestation of anti-Armenian prejudices, the Foreign Minister of Armenia disregards the fact that, unlike his own country, Azerbaijan has preserved its ethnic and cultural diversity to the present day and that many Armenians are living not only in the occupied Daghlyq Garabagh region, but also in the capital and other major cities of Azerbaijan. On the contrary, the international community has repeatedly expressed its indignation with the undisguised promotion by the leadership of Armenia of the odious ideas of racial superiority, ethnic and religious incompatibility, and hatred towards Azerbaijan and other neighbouring nations. The relevant United Nations bodies and other international organizations have repeatedly expressed their serious concerns about the spirit of intolerance prevailing in Armenia and the discriminatory policies and practices pursued in that country. It should be pointed out that the same policies and practices are being implemented by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, where it has carried out ethnic cleansing against all non-Armenians and where it has established the ethnically constructed subordinate separatist entity,

which is ultimately nothing other than the product of aggression and racial discrimination.

The responsibility of Armenia's political and military leadership for the atrocious crimes committed during the war has been well attested to at the international level and even admitted to by Armenia's high-ranking officials. The most shocking revelation is certainly the one made by the current President of Armenia, Mr. Serzh Sargsyan. In his interview with British journalist Thomas de Waal of 15 December 2000, in response to the question as to whether things could have happened differently and whether he had any regrets about the deaths of thousands of people, the Armenian Head of State answered that he had absolutely no regrets, since such upheavals were necessary even if thousands had to die. The full transcript of the interview is available online on the Carnegie Endowment website. Those who are interested in arriving at the truth may familiarize themselves with that piece of evidence, along with numerous other documents that totally disprove what we heard today from the Minister for Foreign of Affairs of Armenia.

Everything I have mentioned definitevely dispels the myths of Armenia as an eternal victim. In reality, by disregarding the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, by continuing to illegally occupy the territories of Azerbaijan, by deliberately denying the right of more than 1 million Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes, by pursuing a racist ideology and by misinterpreting the fundamental norms and principles of international law, Armenia clearly demonstrates who is actually responsible for undermining regional peace, security and stability.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): I apologize for taking the floor at this late hour. It was not my intention. However, I must reply to the comments made just now by the representative of Azerbaijan.

The reply by the representative of Azerbaijan was based on even more lies; not a single word corresponded to the truth. The statement made at the 19th plenary meeting earlier today by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia highlighted all those huge — to put it mildly — discrepancies. I will not go into detail and explain that whatever happened 20 years ago was the expression of the right to self-determination by the people of Nagorno Karabakh, and the fact that the realization of their absolutely legal constitutional right was met with hostilities, massacres and war by Azerbaijan against the peaceful population. Who can blame Armenians of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic for not wanting to live in the same country as their murderers?

Nothing that Azerbaijan says to the world from any rostrum can be considered factual. On the contrary, it is a constant barrage of lies, combined with anti-Armenian racist rhetoric. I suppose their strategy is to tell such unbelievable lies and to repeat them so often that sooner or later people will get used to them. An oriental saying says, "No matter how many times you say 'sweet dates', you still will not feel sweetness in your mouth". That is just wishful thinking. What can one expect from a country whose President openly declares that the Armenians of the world are the enemy of Azerbaijan? I believe that is what is known as xenophobia and it is punishable by law, at least in my country and the rest of the civilized world that we come from and that the United Nations was created to create and cherish.

Azerbaijan is the only country in the world that boasts of its astronomical military expenditures. I remember the time when a rising defence budget was not something to be proud of. But they shout out loudly about it and threaten our being in Nagorno Karabakh. Azerbaijan is a country where someone who has killed a foreigner, an Armenian, is considered a national hero. In my country a murderer would have received what is prescribed by law. The murderer of a sleeping person would have been branded as not only a murderer but a coward. No Armenian in his right mind would live in Baku, despite the many examples the representative of Azerbaijan may bring of Armenians living in Azerbaijan. Even the world chess champion Gary Kasparov recently said that he will never go to Baku until the Nagorno Karabakh issue is resolved and Azerbaijan halts the anti-Armenian hysteria.

Azerbaijan uses the tactic that the best defence is a good offence, hoping that if they put the blame on everybody else for what the world condemns them for, that will save them. However, no one can manipulate world public opinion, not even in oil-dollars-rich Azerbaijan. Therefore no Azerbaijani, and especially no Azerbaijani official, has any historical, moral or legal right to tell the people of Nagorno Karabakh how to live, where to live or how independent to be.

Mr. Desta (Eritrea): I take the floor in exercise of the right of reply in connection with the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Djibouti during his address to the Assembly at the

19th plenary meeting this morning. My delegation was surprised by the Minister's statement about our country.

My delegation does not wish to dwell on the events of 2008, as we have exhaustively addressed the matter in other forums. In a forward-looking manner my delegation would like to stress the following points to set the record straight.

First, Eritrea has always desired good-neighbourly relations with Djibouti, based on mutual respect and economic cooperation.

Secondly, Djibouti bears responsibility for the two-day skirmish of 2008.

Thirdly, in June 2010 the Presidents of Eritrea and Djibouti signed a peace agreement entrusting the Amir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, to mediate the border dispute.

Fourthly, the issue of prisoners of war is part and parcel of the agreement, and both sides agreed to address it. Regrettably, the issue is singled out as a point in the campaign against Eritrea in different forums, including in the Security Council. That raises a serious question about whether the other side is prepared to resolve the matter in accordance with the letter and spirit of the accord, and it has unnecessarily prolonged the peace process.

Fifthly, Eritrea has fully fulfilled its obligations under the agreement and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1862 (2009). It has withdrawn its troops from the common border, which since then has been monitored by Qatari peacekeepers.

Sixthly, Eritrea stresses the ongoing mediation by the Amir of Qatar as the best opportunity for both countries to resolve the outstanding issues, paving the way for cooperative and normal relations. What remains now is for both Governments to engage in good faith in the Amir of Qatar's mediation facilitation. It is important to refrain from engaging in inflammatory statements that could potentially harm the ongoing mediation process. Eritrea affirms it will act in good faith and will remain fully committed to the peace process.

Let me conclude by commending the Amir of Qatar for his mediation role. I also wish to pay tribute to the Qatari peacekeepers deployed along the common border between our two countries.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): I speak in response to remarks made earlier by the representative of India. The disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir is established by Security Council resolutions and agreed upon by both Pakistan and India. A characterization of Jammu and Kashmir or any part of its territory as part of India is therefore untenable. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have yet to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): The remarks just made by the delegation of Armenia, full of distortions and misinterpretations, demonstrate how far that Member State is from engaging in a constructive search for peace in the region. In fact, the delegation of Armenia has introduced nothing new and has once again abused its right to speak from the high rostrum of the General Assembly. The delegation of Armenia did not even want to take the trouble of listening carefully to what we have said, preferring instead to read out a text containing its set of standard falsifications.

As a result, we have heard irrelevant and out-of-context comments, which obviously fail to respond to our demands. Having seen no reason to prolong discussion on the issue at this stage of our deliberations, we would like to express our confidence that Armenia's destructive political agenda is fated never to be realized. Armenia will be obliged to cease its provocative policy, to ensure that the occupation of Azerbaijan's territory is ended, to renounce its territorial claims on neighbouring nations and to establish civilized relations with all countries of the region.

Mr. Kumar (India): I take the floor in exercise of the right of reply because, regrettably, the delegation of Pakistan has once again raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, which is an integral part of India. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have peacefully chosen their destiny in accordance with democratic practices, and they continue to do so. We therefore reject in their entirety the untenable comments from the delegate of Pakistan.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): I am sorry for having to take the floor for the second time. I really wonder how the memory of Azerbaijan's delegation works.

In 1988, the people of Nagorno Karabakh peacefully ask for independence from Azerbaijan; they are attacked by Azerbaijan. Armenians organize self-defence; Azerbaijan unleashes a large-scale war from 1992 to 1994. The people of Nagorno Karabakh stop the

Azerbaijan aggression and declare the independence of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. Those are brief historical facts that took place not so long ago and it is not very difficult to remember those basic textbook facts and stop turning everything upside down.

The only gauge for measuring the sincerity of Azerbaijan's words is their participation in the negotiations of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the responses to the documents on the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict adopted in the frameworks of the OSCE summit held in 2010 in Astana and the ministerial conferences of Helsinki in 2008, Athens in 2009, Almaty in 2010 and Vilnius in 2011. Also, the statements of the Presidents of the co-Chair countries in the framework of the Group of Eight Summit in L'Aquila in 2009, Muskoka in 2010 and Deauville in 2011 and during the Group of 20 Summit in Los Cabos in 2012 are proof of that.

Armenia's position is in line with those documents. Armenia and the international community are speaking in one language with regard to the Nagorno Karabakh issue. It is time for Azerbaijan to listen to the voice of the world.

I would also like to quote another statement that was delivered in the Hall at the 20th plenary meeting today by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus:

> "Belarus is fully convinced that any attempt to make someone do something against their will is doomed to fail. Are we not learning the lessons of the past? After all, neither weapons nor wealth constitute the greatest source of power on Earth. That power stems rather from the spirit of self-determination. If a nation has embarked on its own path of peaceful and progressive development, no then no external force is able to stop it in its tracks. Battles can be won against such a nation, but never wars."

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the exercise of the right of reply.

I will now offer some concluding remarks on the general debate.

Statement by the President

The President: We have come to the end of the general debate of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I would like to thank all speakers for the important contributions they made. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for their assistance and cooperation. I am enormously grateful to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management for its support and understanding. I know I was not the easiest person to handle over the past few days, and I will try make up for that in the next 12 months.

It was my honour to welcome a number of new leaders to the General Assembly for the first time and to hear them express their countries' positions and aspirations. The fact that at this session we heard the views of more than 100 Heads of State or Government and over 70 Deputy Prime Ministers or Ministers for Foreign Affairs is a clear indication that the United Nations remains, in the words of the Charter, a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. It also reaffirms once again the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

The overarching theme I chose for this year's session was "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". Over the past week, we have heard thoughtful and constructive interventions on that critical topic. That catalysed fruitful discourse in the plenary and at numerous side events, in turn stimulating many bilateral consultations.

Some speakers offered concrete proposals on how the mechanisms that are in place can be better utilized. Those included calls to increase support for United Nations peacekeeping efforts. A number of interventions recognized the growing role that the African Union, the European Union and other regional organizations are playing in United Nations missions. Many delegations introduced concepts or ideas to be incorporated into the overall efforts to revitalize the General Assembly.

Numerous addresses emphasized the fact that deep-seated structural causes often form the backdrop of the immediate political symptoms of disputes. They called for a more comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and resolution that would encompass in a truly holistic way both short-term and long-term measures.

A great many delegations congratulated the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan for

having reached agreements on security issues, border demarcation and the normalization of economic relations, and urged them to resolve the outstanding issues.

We heard serious concerns expressed from the rostrum about the world's increasing geostrategic volatility and unpredictability. A great number of delegations emphasized the fundamental importance of respecting the basic tenets of international law, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States. Strong emphasis was placed on the principle of the sovereign equality of Member States as being the backbone of effective multilateralism.

Speaker after speaker reiterated their positions that establishing respect for the rule of law was essential to achieving lasting peace in the aftermath of conflicts. That would engender more effective protection of human rights and create the conditions leading to economic progress and development.

The general debate brought about a congruence of views on the fact that conflict prevention, durable peace and security and sustainable development can be achieved only through an integrated approach. Many delegations addressed the consequences of the world's economic crisis, linking them not only to the necessity of increasing poverty reduction campaigns, but also to fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The emerging consensus is that efforts must be intensified in order to fulfil the MDGs over the next three years.

A great many speakers stressed the need to begin the swift implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, underlining the critical role that this session of the General Assembly has to play in moving the process forward. That includes setting out a list of sustainable development goals and proposing options on an effective financing strategy.

Improving various aspects of global economic governance was also one of the most widely addressed topics. The enhancement of South-South cooperation was strongly emphasized. In addition, the statements of many delegations reinforced the view that the General Assembly should play a more prominent role in discussions on this issue, underlining the importance of holding meetings in the plenary before and after important Group of 20 events. Concerns were also raised about inclusivity, accountability and transparency.

Numerous delegations raised the Palestinian statehood issue. There was resounding support for a two-State solution that would take into account the legitimate concerns of Israelis and Palestinians, including viability and security. Many speakers called for a resumption of negotiations that would lead to a comprehensive solution, underlining the importance for the international community to strengthen support for the peace process. Some called for the United Nations to play a more decisive role in that endeavour.

Many Member States stressed their support for democratic changes in a number of Arab countries. They also expressed deep concerns with the deteriorating security and human rights situation in Syria. There was unequivocal encouragement for the ongoing efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

Considerable attention was also paid to the various aspects of the nuclear issue and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. A number of delegations stressed the legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technology by all Member States, while others emphasized adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the safeguards mandated by the International Atomic Energy Agency as overriding concerns. In that context, we heard forceful messages that the very survival of nations may be at stake.

Speakers also responded to what the Secretary-General called the perfect storm of vulnerability that is now sweeping across the Sahel. We heard their disquiet over the growing threat that terrorism, attempts at unilateral secession and transborder organized crime pose to regional stability and development efforts.

Terrorism in all its forms was strongly condemned. So were recent blasphemous insults to religious figures and beliefs, but so, too, was the ensuing violence, including the murder of the United States Ambassador to Libya a few weeks ago.

In opening the general debate, I highlighted the enhanced role I would like the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations to play in conflict prevention. The importance of strengthening dialogue and understanding among cultures and faiths was a recurrent theme in the speeches. The substandard state of religious freedom in parts of the world was also highlighted as a growing concern.

Member States expressed cautious optimism that Somalia was moving in a positive direction, after so many failed starts. There were calls for the United Nations to redouble its efforts to secure peace in that country, as well as in other parts of that continent, including the Great Lakes region. Moreover, considerable attention was devoted to Africa's development needs, with stress on the imperative to keep the topic high on the agenda of the General Assembly.

Many delegations raised human trafficking and the illicit trade in drugs and small arms as issues of particular concern. Climate change, the loss of biodiversity and other environmental challenges were also discussed.

Speaker after speaker underlined the importance of the ongoing efforts at revitalization of the General Assembly, as well as Security Council reform. Emphasis was placed on improving working methods, with several delegations stressing the need for greater transparency and cooperation with other bodies in the United Nations system as a critical issue. A number of delegations presented their views on improving the human rights treaty bodies system. Speakers also underscored the importance of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women. Other important matters were also raised, such as the promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples and of persons with disabilities.

When I opened the debate, on 25 September, I called on Member States to have faith in our ability to come together in the full understanding of our common destiny, so that our Assembly would go down in history as an Assembly of peace. In reviewing the many statements that have been made, I have been struck by how much common ground exists on a wide range of issues. Obviously, significant differences of opinion remain to be overcome. Nevertheless, I believe there is room for optimism.

World leaders have given us strategic guidance on how to move forward in the implementation of the agenda of the sixty-seventh session. In the time ahead, I intend to continue consultations with Member States, the Main Committees and regional and informal groups on the proposed programme of work.

Let us now dedicate ourselves to the hard work ahead, which begins in earnest as early as tomorrow. Let us try to be more transparent and efficient in how we conduct our affairs, making the best use of our time and resources to advance common objectives. Let us engage with a readiness to compromise and try hard to strengthen trust in each other, and in so doing help to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the 193 States Members of the United Nations.

I believe that now we truly have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 8.35 p.m.